



CALL FOR ACTION ON THE DETERIORATING SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY (OPT) AND ISRAEL

10 November 2023

CIDSE calls for an immediate cease-fire with an urgent, immediate end to the siege of Gaza and humanitarian access to all civilians in Gaza.

To date, more than 10 000 Palestinians, two-thirds of them women and children have been killed in Israeli bombardments on Gaza since October 7th. 1400 Israelis have been killed, including at least 31 children, most of them during the attack by Hamas into Southern Israel. At least 240 civilian hostages, including 33 children and military captives are [held](#) by Hamas in Gaza.¹ The Israeli military siege on Gaza continues, as do the rockets fired by Palestinian militants into Israel. CIDSE strongly condemns all violence against civilians, as well as the Israeli siege of Gaza that amounts to collective punishment against the Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is a man-made catastrophe. [UNICEF](#) stated that “*Gaza has become a graveyard for thousands of children. It’s a living hell for everyone else*”. UN OCHA [reports](#) more than 25 900 Palestinians are injured and 1.5 million are internally displaced. Civilians are struggling to find clean water and food as the humanitarian assistance entering from Egypt meets only a fraction of people’s needs. Hospitals, ambulances and other medical facilities have been attacked, leaving Gaza’s healthcare system in a state of collapse.²

CIDSE calls for the protection of all civilians, a principle that is enshrined in International Humanitarian Law. Indiscriminate bombing and attacks against the Palestinian civilian population and infrastructure such as hospitals and schools by the Israeli army may amount to War Crimes, while persecution and collective punishment amount to Crimes Against Humanity under the Rome Statute. Similarly, the killing of civilians, the taking of hostages and subjecting them to mistreatment, and the execution of captured soldiers by Hamas amount to war crimes under the Rome statute and the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention.

The urgency of the situation cannot be stressed enough. UN experts [warn](#) that “*Palestinian people are at grave risk of genocide,... the time for action is now. Israel’s allies also bear responsibility and must act now to prevent its disastrous course of action*”. In this context, the EU and Member States must

¹ Only 4 hostages have been released by Hamas so far.

² Over a third of hospitals non-functional and the remaining ones are rationing fuel, supplies, space, and medicine. <https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/speeches/critical-infrastructure-is-collapsing-in-gaza-statement-from-jorge-moreira-da-silva-un-under-secretary-general-and-unops-executive-director>

live up to their responsibilities as third-party states and take appropriate measures to ensure compliance and prevent violations of international humanitarian law, as is required under the 1949 Geneva Conventions (Common Article 1).³

CIDSE is also deeply concerned by the escalation of violence in the West Bank. Since October 7th more than 150 Palestinians, including 44 children have been [killed](#) by the Israeli army and settlers and 2 Israelis were killed in attacks by Palestinians. While the eyes of the world are on Gaza, Israeli settlers in the West Bank have intensified their attacks aimed at forcibly displacing Palestinian communities. As a result, in the past weeks at least thirteen Palestinian herding communities comprising 905 people, including 356 children have been [uprooted](#) and more are at imminent risk of displacement if no action is taken.

CIDSE is also alarmed about the situation within Israel. CIDSE members' partner Adalah [reports](#) on a severe crack-down on freedom of speech of Palestinian Citizens of Israel and Jewish Israelis who oppose the war in Gaza. Palestinian university students have been suspended or expelled, and Palestinian employees have been fired over mere expressions of solidarity with Palestinian civilians in Gaza or quotes from the Quran. More than 110 people have been arrested for speech-related offences, due to the wide discretion the Israeli government has given to the police in defining what is considered support for terrorism. Israeli human rights attorney, [Michael Sfard](#), warned that individual free speech is under severe pressure, saying that "there is a wave of silencing of any type of, not only criticism, but also just compassion"

In these difficult moments, we must also remember the root causes of the current violence. The region will never be secure or at peace until the Palestinian people's right to self-determination is fulfilled, and there is an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, and the systematic oppression and discrimination of Palestinians by Israel. Justice must be the central component of the roadmap for diplomatic action by the EU and Member States, only in this way can a just and lasting political solution be found.

To stop the unspeakable human suffering and dehumanization CIDSE urges the EU and its member states to:

1. Call for an immediate and internationally guaranteed cease-fire.
2. Call upon the parties to live up to their obligations under International Humanitarian law and protect civilians, in particular children, wounded and sick, medical staff and humanitarian workers. This should also include the immediate unconditional release of all hostages.
3. Demand an end to the siege on Gaza and immediate humanitarian access to all civilians, including those in Northern Gaza.
4. Take decisive measures to stop the escalating violent attacks by Israeli settlers and halt the forced displacement of Palestinians in the oPt.
5. Call upon Israel to guarantee respect and protection for the rights of minorities, particularly the Palestinian citizens of Israel, and safeguard the right to freedom of thought and expression of all citizens.
6. Ensure accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law by supporting the ICC investigation into the situation in the oPt.

³ This also in line with the European Union's own [guidelines](#) on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law